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Tomorrow's
weather 64 | 49



Pulse
of Wabash

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Do you have a passion for writing, photography and local sports? The Wabash Plain Dealer is now accepting applications for paid stringers for the upcoming winter sports season. To apply, email your writing and photography clips, cover letter, resume and list of references to rburgess@wabashplainealer.com.

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Public, WHS staff invited to superintendent search meetings

The Wabash City Schools (WCS) board has officially begun the search for its new superintendent and your

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Structure fire leaves one North Manchester girl dead

First-responders unable to revive Alyvia Floor, 12, who was found unresponsive

By ROB BURGESS
Wabash Plain Dealer Editor

A structure fire last week in North Manchester left one 12-year-old girl dead. At around midnight on Tuesday, March 2, the Wabash County Central Dispatch Center received

a report of a structure fire in the 1000 block of North Market Street, according to North Manchester Fire Department (NMFD) chief of fire operations Cam Kissinger. Kissinger said upon arrival, NMFD units found "heavy fire involvement"

coming from a bedroom area on the northeast corner of the residence. "Firefighters were advised that there was a person still inside the residence," said Kissinger. Kissinger said firefighters and law enforcement officers found Alyvia Floor, 12, inside the northwest bedroom close to a window. Kissinger said a firefight-

er pulled her out through the west window of the bedroom and immediate medical aid was initiated. "She was unresponsive and CPR was performed," said Kissinger. "Efforts to revive her were unsuccessful." Kissinger said the fire was under control within 35 to 50 minutes from arrival

See FIRE, page A2

In the bag: 'Beethoven's Belated Birthday Bash' concert set for Sunday



Kathy Davis plays in a mask with a bag.

Photos provided by Jennifer Wagner

Manchester
Symphony Orchestra
fights COVID with
masks, instrument
covers, partitions

By JENNIFER WAGNER

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Manchester Symphony Orchestra has found creative solutions to stage concerts. Its third performance of the season, "Beethoven's Belated Birthday Bash," is at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 14 in Cordier Auditorium on the North Manchester



campus of Manchester University. General admission is \$15. It is free for Manchester students, faculty and staff, and anyone younger than 18.

The Manchester University event technology director came up with a way to enclose each woodwind and brass player to limit the spread of aerosols that might carry the COVID-19 virus.

on stage, and that allowed for social distancing. Wind instruments pose additional challenges because players expel air to produce notes and keyholes can leak air. This spring semester, the symphony received a grant of about \$12,000 from the state of Indiana that made it possible to bring back the brass, woodwind and percussion sections for the

See CONCERT, page A2

Wabash
County's
advisory
level headed
from yellow
to blue

ISDH: Hoosiers
age 50 and older
are now eligible for
COVID-19 vaccine

By ROB BURGESS
Wabash Plain Dealer Editor

On Wednesday, March 3, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) sent an encouraging signal about Wabash County's COVID-19 advisory level. The state's county-by-county dashboard is updated at noon Wednesdays with results are as of the previous Sunday. During the most recent update, ISDH indicated Wabash County was steadily moving from a yellow advisory level, the second-lowest, to blue, the lowest. According to the ISDH, "a county must remain at a lower weekly ... score for two consecutive weeks to

See ADVISORY, page A2

Local cleanup days announced

Wabash, North
Manchester to hold
events in early May

By ROB BURGESS
Wabash Plain Dealer Editor

Cleanup days have been scheduled for early May in Wabash and North Manchester. On Friday, Mayor Scott Long said the city would be returning to curbside spring cleanup for this year. "We know that the pandemic and the changes that we made in 2020 were not ideal, but we were able to keep our Street Department employees healthy and safe throughout the year by taking this step," said Long. Long said they were working in conjunction with the Wabash County Solid Waste Management District's annual Spring Tox-Away Day. Long said as a result, they would offer curbside spring

See CLEANUP, page A4

Indiana 15 lane closures begin this week in Wabash

Work to continue between Indiana 13
and Wedcor Avenue through mid-summer

By ROB BURGESS
Wabash Plain Dealer Editor

Starting this week and extending through the middle of the summer, local motorists will face restrictions on Indiana 15 in Wabash. On Monday, Indiana De-

partment of Transportation (INDOT) public relations manager Hunter Petroviak said alternating lane closures are planned for Indiana 15 starting on or after Wednesday, March 10. The work is happening between Indiana 13 and

Wedcor Avenue. Petroviak said widths will be restricted to 13 feet during the project and that loads wider than 13 feet should seek an alternate route using the nearest numbered state, U.S. or interstate routes. "This project is a continuation of a contract that started last year," said Petroviak.

Petroviak said work is scheduled to wrap up by mid-summer. Petroviak said the cost of the project is just under \$2.9 million and is an 80 percent to 20 percent split. Petroviak said 80 percent of the cost is being paid through federal aid and 20 percent is being paid for by the state. "INDOT urges drivers to

slow down and stay alert near crews," said Petroviak. Petroviak said this work is being done is a resurfacing project that includes some pipework and the addition of ramps compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Petroviak said a new traffic signal will also be in-

See CLOSURE, page A2



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Registered Representative



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LOCAL BRIEFS

VFW Post No. 286 to host tenderloin dinner Friday

The Wabash Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post No. 286 will hold a tenderloin dinner from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, March 12 at 3678 W. Old 24, according to Dan Ford. The menu will include hand-breaded tenderloin, potato salad and coleslaw. The cost will be \$9 per person. The event will be open to the public. Carryout will be

available.

Ford said the event will be following all local COVID-19 guidelines.

For more information, call 260-563-2463.

Jazz ensemble, symphonic band perform Friday at MU

The Manchester University Music Department will present “Skyline” at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 12 in Corder Auditorium on the North

Manchester campus, according to assistant director of media relations Anne Gregory.

The concert features the Jazz Ensemble and Symphonic Band under the direction of Scott Humphries, director of instrumental studies and music education.

General admission is \$5. It is free for Manchester University students, faculty and staff. Masks and social distancing are required at all times.

FIRE

From page A1

on the scene and those fire units were on the scene until approximately 6:30 a.m. Kissinger said the fire was believed to have started in the northeast bedroom. Kissinger said assisting at the scene were the Chester Township Fire Department, Pleasant Township Fire Department, North Manchester Police Department,

Wabash County Sheriff’s Department, Parkview EMS, Indiana State Fire Investigator and the Wabash County Coroner.

At Wednesday’s North Manchester Town Council meeting, several councilmembers offered their condolences.

On Friday, town manager Adam Pendrod said the cause of the fire was still under investigation.

Also on Friday, Sheriff Ryan Baker confirmed they

assisted on the scene, but that the NMFD was the lead on the case, and referred all future questions to them.

On Monday, North Manchester Police Department Chief Jim Kirk said they had no further information on the case at that time.

This story will be updated as more information becomes available.

Rob Burgess, Wabash Plain Dealer editor, may be reached by email at rburgess@wabashplaindealer.com.

ADVISORY

From page A1

move down to a lower advisory level.”

So, that means if current trends continue, Wabash County will be in the blue very soon.

This is a far cry from where things stood locally and statewide just a few months ago. In late November 2020, Wabash County’s rating was in the red, the highest level. Since then it has slipped, first to orange, the second-highest, and then yellow.

“We continue to make methodical progress,” said Gov. Eric Holcomb, during a televised press conference Wednesday. “Our county metrics ... continue to express the progress that is happening. ... We’re continuing to move in the right direction.”

State health commissioner Dr. Kristina Box said there “many positive trends to celebrate.”

Box said it had been since September 2020 that the state’s positivity rating was as low as it was then.

Also on Wednesday, the ISDH announced that Hoosiers age 50 and older are now eligible to receive a free COVID-19 vaccine.

“This expansion of eligibility makes the vaccine available to an additional 412,000 Hoosiers,” stated the ISDH.

Due to limited vaccine supplies nationally, Indiana has prioritized healthcare workers, first responders and those who are most vulnerable in its vaccine rollout. Individuals age 50 and older account for just over 35 percent of the state’s population but represent 80 percent of the COVID-19 hospitalizations and 98 percent of all COVID-19 deaths.

“Additional groups will be added as more vaccine becomes available,” stated the ISDH. “Vaccine appointments for this newly eligible population will be available over the next several weeks to align with expected vaccine deliveries to the state.”

On Tuesday, the ISDH announced that 16,511 people received a free COVID-19 vaccine during a four-day clinic at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, including 4,090 who were vaccinated on Monday.

As of Tuesday, 1,154,141 first doses of vaccine have been administered in Indiana, and 724,587 individuals are fully vaccinated.

According to the ISDH vaccination dashboard, Wabash County had administered 5,767 first doses of the vaccine, and 3,444 second doses. Of those, 19 first doses and 63 second doses were administered on Monday in Wabash County.

Additional vaccination clinics are planned Friday, March 12 to Saturday, March 13 at Ivy Tech Community College in Sellersburg and Friday, March 26 to Saturday, March 27 at the University of Notre Dame. Both the Ivy Tech and Notre Dame sites are fully booked.

A clinic also is being planned in Gary the week-end of Saturday, March 20.

Details will be announced later this week.

Appointments for these clinics must be scheduled in advance, and individuals must show proof of residency and eligibility upon arrival.

To schedule a vaccine, visit https://ourshot.in.gov and select a location from one of nearly 390 clinics around the state. Hoosiers who do not have a computer or cell phone or those who need assistance scheduling an appointment can call 211 or contact one of Indiana’s Area Agencies on Aging or AARP. Nearly 70 libraries around the state also are helping Hoosiers schedule their appointments.

Vaccination clinics that are part of the federal vaccine program, including those at Meijer and Kroger, appear on the clinic map at https://ourshot.in.gov but are scheduled through those retailers’ platforms, not through the state centralized system.

Long-term care facilities

The ISDH’s long-term care facilities dashboard is current as of Wednesday, Feb. 24 and was updated Wednesday, March 3. The dashboard is updated weekly at noon Wednesdays. New positive cases and deaths have occurred over a range of dates but were reported to the ISDH seven days before the last dashboard update.

During the latest update, in Wabash County:

■ Timbercrest Senior Living Community in North Manchester reported 10 total resident positive cases, fewer than five total resident deaths and 50 staff positive cases.

■ Peabody Retirement Community in North Manchester reported 54 total resident positive cases, 14 total resident deaths and 125 staff positive cases.

■ Wellbrooke of Wabash reported 34 total resident positive cases, 12 total resident deaths and 33 staff positive cases.

■ Autumn Ridge Rehabilitation Centre reported 19 total positive cases, fewer than five total resident deaths and 15 staff positive cases.

■ Vernon Health and Rehabilitation reported 36 total resident positive cases, fewer than five total resident deaths and 27 staff positive cases.

■ Rolling Meadows Health Care Centre in LaFontaine reported 56 total resident positive cases, 16 total resident deaths and 15 staff positive cases.

■ Miller’s Merry Manor – Wabash East reported 51 total resident positive cases, nine total resident deaths and 32 staff positive cases.

■ Miller’s Merry Manor – Wabash West reported fewer than five total resident positive cases, fewer than five total resident deaths and 14 staff positive cases.

Local figures

■ On Wednesday, the ISDH reported five new local positive COVID-19 cases, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,323, with 14,184 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating

for all tests was 2.8 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 9.3 percent.

■ On Thursday, the ISDH reported three new local positive COVID-19 cases, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,326, with 14,201 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating for all tests was 2.6 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 9.2 percent.

■ On Friday, the ISDH reported four new local positive COVID-19 cases, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,330, with 14,213 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating for all tests was 2.5 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 9.4 percent.

■ On Saturday, the ISDH reported one new local positive COVID-19 case, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,331, with 14,225 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating for all tests was 2.6 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 10.3 percent.

■ On Sunday, the ISDH reported eight new local positive COVID-19 cases, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,339, with 14,287 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating for all tests was 2.6 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 12.1 percent.

■ On Monday, the ISDH reported one new local positive COVID-19 case, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,340, with 14,284 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating for all tests was 2.5 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 10.9 percent.

■ On Tuesday, the ISDH reported no new local positive COVID-19 cases, bringing Wabash County’s total to 3,340, with 14,290 tests. The local seven-day positivity rating for all tests was 2.5 percent. The local seven-day positivity rating for unique individuals was 12.2 percent.

Statewide figures


As of Tuesday, the ISDH reported 668,308 Hoosiers have been diagnosed with COVID-19, an increase of 593 from the previous day. A total of 12,335 Hoosiers are confirmed to have died from COVID-19, an increase of 22 from the previous day. Another 427 probable deaths have been reported based on clinical diagnoses in patients for whom no positive test is on record.

To date, 3,156,377 unique individuals have been tested in Indiana, up from 3,153,395 on Monday. A total of 8,274,948 tests, including repeat tests for unique individuals, have been reported to the ISDH since Feb. 26, 2020.


To find testing sites around the state, visit www.coronavirus.in.gov and click on the COVID-19 testing information link.

Rob Burgess, Wabash Plain Dealer editor, may be reached by email at rburgess@wabashplaindealer.com.


5-Day Weather Summary




Wednesday
Mostly Cloudy
65 / 55




Thursday
Few Showers
64 / 49



Friday
Showers Likely
60 / 39




Saturday
Few Showers
49 / 31




Sunday
Mostly Cloudy
48 / 38

Sun and Moon


Today's sunset 6:45 p.m.
Tomorrow's sunrise 7:00 a.m.




New
3/13



First
3/21



Full
3/28



Last
4/4

Detailed Local Outlook

Today we will see mostly cloudy skies, high of 66°, humidity of 50%. South wind 11 to 21 mph. Expect mostly cloudy skies tonight with a 40% chance of showers, overnight low of 55°. South wind 16 to 19 mph. Thursday, skies will be cloudy with a 65% chance of showers, high of 65°, humidity of 72%.



Photo provided by Jennifer Wagner

Kathy Davis, associate professor of chemistry at MU and principal flutist, says she has struggled a bit with the flute bag and trapezoid-shaped mask.

CONCERT

From page A1

final two concerts of the season.

The money was used to buy special masks for all wind players, bell covers for the brass instruments, and instrument bags for woodwinds that are specifically designed to minimize the spread of any virus-laden aerosols that could be produced while the instruments are in use.

“Being able to use these funds to bring our full orchestra back together really is a triumph for the arts against COVID-19,” said symphony conductor and MU Professor Debra Lynn.

The masks, bell covers and bags have not come without issues. Kathy Davis, associate professor of chemistry at MU and principal flutist, says she has struggled a bit with the flute bag and trapezoid-shaped mask.

“The bag over the flute causes extra clumsiness,

and I am no longer able to put my flute down fully during rests where I normally would. The mask also keeps collapsing against my face, making it difficult to play at times,” she said. “However, ultimately I am so happy to be playing again that all of the challenges are small in comparison.”

Luckily, Plexiglass partitions are coming to the rescue. The University event technology director came up with a way to enclose each woodwind and brass player to limit the spread of aerosols that might carry the COVID-19 virus.

“The bags pose a lot of problems for bassoon players, like getting caught on wires, and the Plexiglass barriers are so much nicer to play in,” said Kendall Brown, a junior at MU who plays the bassoon. One of the newest members of the symphony, Brown is from Tecumseh, Michigan. He said it is quite difficult to hear well with the barriers,

“so it is a challenge we have to overcome.”

The March 14th concert will include two works by Ludwig van Beethoven, a nod to the concert in his honor that was shut down by COVID late last year. The belated 250th birthday bash features a composition by Korngold, “Theme and Variations,” and the “Bacchanale” dance from Saint-Saëns’s opera, “Samson and Dalilah.”

This is Lynn’s first season as the symphony’s conductor. After 12 years, Assistant Professor Scott Humphries, director of bands and music education, passed the baton to Lynn while he concentrated on establishing the Spartan Pride Marching Band at MU. With Lynn on sabbatical in the fall, MU music instructor Robert Lynn conducted the first two performances of the season.

Jennifer Wagner is the student assistant in the Office of Strategic Communications at Manchester University.

CLOSURE

From page A1

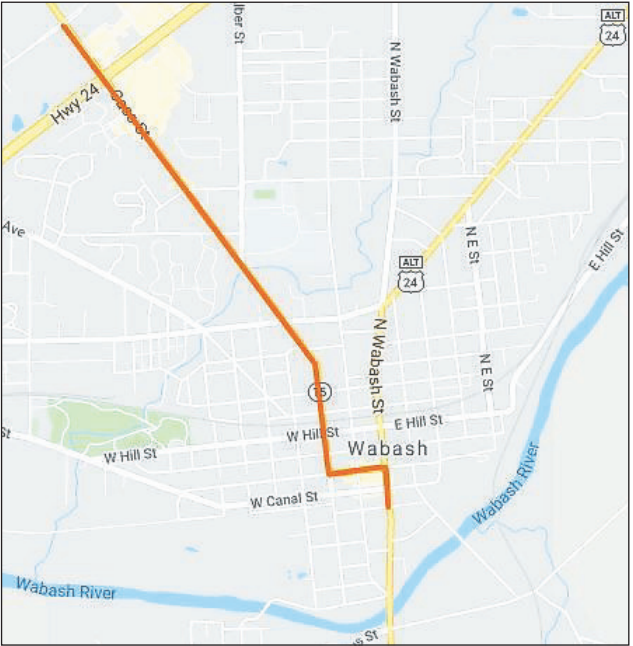
stalled at the intersection of Indiana 15 and Wedcor Avenue.


“At this time I’m not aware of any other closures that are related to this project but if they are necessary we will, of course, pass those along,” said Petroviak.

Rob Burgess, Wabash Plain Dealer editor, may be reached by email at rburgesswabashplaindealer.com.

The work is happening between Indiana 13 and Wedcor Avenue.

Provided graphic





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Obituaries

Volunteers are key at vaccine sites – it pays off with a shot

By **TERRY TANG**
and **MANUEL VALDES**
Associated Press

SEATTLE — When Seattle’s largest health care system got a mandate from Washington state to create a mass COVID-19 vaccination site, organizers knew that gathering enough volunteers would be almost as crucial as the vaccine itself.

“We could not do this without volunteers,” said Renee Rassilyer-Bomers, chief quality officer for Swedish Health Services and head of its vaccination site at Seattle University. “The sheer volume and number of folks that we wanted to be able to serve and bring in requires ... 320 individuals each day.”

As states ramp up vaccination distribution in the fight against the coronavirus, volunteers are needed to do everything from direct traffic to check people in so vaccination sites run smoothly. In return for their work, they’re often given a shot. Many people who don’t yet qualify for a vaccine – including those who are young and healthy – have been volunteering in hopes of getting a dose they otherwise may not receive for months. Large vaccination clinics across the country have seen thousands trying to nab limited numbers of volunteer shifts.

It’s raised questions at a time when supplies are limited and some Americans have struggled to get vaccinated even if they are eligible. But medical ethicists say volunteers are key to the public health effort and there’s nothing wrong with them wanting protection from the virus.

Ben Dudden, 35, of Roanoke, Virginia, volunteered at a mass vaccination clinic

in the nearby city of Salem on a day off from his part-time job at the Roanoke Pinball Museum. His wife, a nurse practitioner who was administering doses, encouraged him to volunteer in case he could get vaccinated.

He spent that January day helping people fill out questionnaires, not knowing if he might get the coveted dose.

“It wasn’t an official thing like, ‘Everybody who needs a vaccine come this way.’ I kind of had to ask,” Dudden said. “At end of day, I found whoever was in charge of that.”

He got what he was hoping for and still wants to volunteer again.

“It was a little bit of a selfish thing – ‘I’m gonna get the vaccine if I do this’ – but for me, it wasn’t the only factor,” Dudden said.

At the Seattle vaccination clinic, Swedish Health Services considers volunteers part of the state’s Phase 1 vaccination group. About 5,000 have been inoculated, and about 1,000 of them have come back to work again, Rassilyer-Bomer said.

During their shifts, volunteers are handed colored vests matched to their skill level and experience. The majority wear orange for general tasks, which includes sanitizing clipboards, asking people to fill out forms, taking temperatures and monitoring the newly vaccinated to ensure no dangerous side effects.

Some may question whether it’s fair for volunteers to get to the front of the line for what’s often clerical work.

Nancy Berlinger, a bioethicist at the Hastings Center, a research institute in Gar-

risen, New York, said the bottom line is that volunteers are interacting with the public and there’s nothing wrong with them wanting protection.

They also go through training and other obligations.

“There would be easier ways to game the system,” Berlinger said. “If that was really your goal, this could take more work I think than some other routes I can think of.”

While many volunteer shifts are several hours on weekdays, Berlinger said that doesn’t necessarily mean only people of a certain class or demographic can sacrifice that much time.

“That could apply to students, it could apply to people who are unemployed, people who are retired. It could be people who are family caregivers,” Berlinger said.

On a chilly January night in suburban Phoenix, Lou Ann Lovell, a 67-year-old retiree, got the Pfizer vaccine after volunteering from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. at a state-run site at State Farm Stadium, where the Arizona Cardinals play. Her daughter persuaded her and other relatives to volunteer.

Lovell committed before realizing those 65 and older would be eligible for vaccines days later. Still, she’s glad she did.

“For the first time, I felt I was part of something that was really important and big,” said Lovell, who would like to volunteer again. “You stand there and see all these headlights and people are just continually pouring in there.”

The stadium and another state-run site in metro Phoenix require a combined 3,900 volunteers a week.

HandsOn Greater Phoenix, a nonprofit handling online volunteer recruitment, opens 1,400 to 2,000 spots a few times a week, and interest hasn’t waned, CEO Rhonda Oliver said. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people try to sign up every time new spots open, she said.

Volunteers who have nabbed shifts say they shouldn’t be lumped in with those who believe they’re entitled to a vaccine.

In the Seattle area, three King County hospitals came under fire last month after revelations that donors, board members and some hospital volunteers used their connections to get shots. The King County Council approved a measure calling on state lawmakers and Gov. Jay Inslee to make it illegal to grant special access to the vaccine.

Berlinger said there’s a clear delineation between a connected official and a volunteer at a vaccine clinic getting a shot.

“The volunteers we’re talking about at registration centers are people who are part of the public health effort. They are performing a crucial role,” Berlinger said. “It’s easier to help people who already have privilege. The thing about COVID is we have to push away from that and we have to say, ‘No, we must allocate vaccine and vaccination.’”

Lovell, the retired volunteer in Arizona, said critics should target the healthy 20-somethings she saw trying to get the vaccine the night she volunteered.

“If you want to volunteer, volunteer and work,” she said. “If you say, ‘I don’t want to do that,’ then wait until your number comes up.”

Rebecca Sue (Thompson) Summers

Nov. 4, 1937 – March 6, 2021

Becky was born in Wabash, Indiana to Raymond and Pauline Thompson, on Nov. 4, 1937.

She attended Linlawn Grade School and Noble Township High School. Becky was a cheerleader during junior high school, and a majorette during her high school years.

Becky met the love of her life in grade school and after completing high school, they were married and started a life together in the ministry. Serving churches in Minnesota, Indiana and Texas over their 63+ years together. In the early years, Becky served as song leader for Pearson’s Mill Church Camp near Converse Indiana for several years in the summer.

Becky loved children and opened her home to be a daycare many times over the years.

In 1969, Becky and her husband Bernie, co-founded a church in Alto (Kokomo) Indiana, which is now Chapel Hill Christian Church.

Later in life, Becky went back and obtained her Associates Degree from Word of Faith Bible College in Dallas, Texas, and became officially Ordained as a Minister.

Becky’s hobbies in her final years consisted of loving on babies and creating custom made greeting cards. People who received these were always overwhelmed



by the work and detail involved in making them. It was a true art.

Becky is preceded in death by her parents, Raymond C. Thompson and Pauline Thompson; Brothers and Sisters-In-Law, Jack Thompson (Mary Louise), Patrick Thompson (Karen); Sisters, Mary Lou Diefenbaugh and Phyllis Coppock; Great Granddaughter, Emmalynne Rianne Denney.

Becky is survived by her husband, Bernard L. Summers of Fort Worth; Sons and Daughters-In-Law, Mark A. Summers MD of San Antonio (Patty), Jeffrey D. Summers of Fort Worth (Donna) and Gregory P. Summers of Tipton Indiana (Kim). Seventeen grandchildren and nineteen great grandchildren.

Memorial Service: 11:30 am Thursday, March 11, 2021 at The Abbey Church, 10400 Jacksboro Highway, Fort Worth, TX 76135.

Velia Louise Francis

Velia Louise Francis, 73, passed away March 6, 2021.

Velia will be remembered by father, Smith Helton; sons, Jeffrey Francis and Stephen (Melissa) Francis; daughter, Kelly (Phil) Kiser; brother, Smith Ray (Teresa) Helton; grandchildren, Brienne (Nate) Anderson, Madison (Paul) Robison, Mason Sell, Leslie Derosssett, Kelsey (Kaleb) Clements; great-grandchildren,

Braxton Anderson, Jaxon Anderson, Emery Robison, Max Robison, Landon Clements, Wyatt Clements, Isaiah Bruner.

Calling Tuesday, March 9th, 2021 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at McKee Mortuary, 1401 State Road 114 West, North Manchester. Services will be held March 10th, 2021 at 10 a.m. Arrangements are entrusted to McKee Mortuary.

Tracy Estep

Feb. 25, 1962 – March 5, 2021

Tracy Estep, 59, North Manchester, died March 5, 2021 at Parkview Regional Medical Center, Fort Wayne. She was born in Warsaw on Feb. 25, 1962.

Tracy is survived by her mother, Elizabeth Estep; daughters, Sarah Estep, and Jennifer (Fredrick) Burnett; brother, Roy (Marsha) Estep; sisters Peggy Newcomer, Susan (Ron) Bashore, Donna Krider; and TyAnn

Estep. Visitation Wednesday, March 10, 2021 from 4 to 7 p.m. at McKee Mortuary, 1401 State Road 114 West, North Manchester. Funeral services will be held Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 6 p.m. with calling beginning at 5 p.m. at McKee Mortuary.

Final arrangements are entrusted to McKee Mortuary.

Paul ‘Ray’ Webb

Services for Paul “Ray” Webb are 10 am, Saturday, at Grandstaff-Hentgen Funeral Service, Wabash. Burial will

be in Memorial Lawns Cemetery, Wabash. Visitation 4 pm – 7 pm Friday at the funeral home.

U.S. airlines adding jobs, extending rebound from October low

By **DAVID KOENIG**
AP Airlines Writer

U.S. airlines are adding jobs as industry employment extends a rebound from a low in October, when tens of thousands of airline workers were briefly laid off after federal payroll aid expired.

Cargo airlines have added jobs while passenger airlines have shed workers, mostly through incentives for workers to quit or take early retirement.

The Transportation Department said Tuesday that 713,949 people held full-time or part-time jobs at airlines in mid-January, up from 694,638 in December and the low of 673,278 in October.

However, the industry’s January employment was still down 5 percent from January 2020, before the United States felt the brunt of the coronavirus pandemic, which has devastated air travel.

Delta Air Lines has made the sharpest reduction in its work force, cutting nearly 28,000 jobs, or 30.9 percent

of its workers, since January 2020, according to figures reported to the Transportation Department.

United Airlines cut more than 15,000 jobs, or 16.7 percent, in the 12 months. American Airlines eliminated 8,700 jobs, or 8 percent of its workers, and Southwest shed more than 4,600 jobs, or 7.5 percent.

Hawaiian, Republic and JetBlue all reduced their workforces by more than 10 percent.

Airlines were barred from laying off workers for six months last year as a condition of up to \$25 billion in federal payroll assistance. United, American and others furloughed thousands of workers when the aid lapsed in October, but put them back on the payroll after Congress retroactively approved another \$25 billion in aid in December.

Legislation pending in Congress would give airlines another \$14 billion to cover about 60 percent of their payroll costs and bar layoffs through September.

Firefighters, faith leaders team up to vaccinate vulnerable

By **GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO**
Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH — At the end of a recent Sunday evening Spanish-language Mass, the Rev. Roberto Cid made an announcement that perked up many gray-haired heads.

“If you are over 65 and a Florida resident and want a COVID vaccine, call the parish office and we can help you,” the Roman Catholic priest said, as happy nodding spread through the pews of historic St. Patrick church.

In much of the country, getting the coveted vaccine has been tremendously difficult for many older adults due to complicated and overtaxed websites and bureaucracies – and even more so for those who have disabilities, are homebound or have no family to help.

But in Miami Beach, faith leaders and the fire department have joined resources to expedite getting shots in the arms of older adults starting with the homebound and those in low-income housing, winning plaudits from both the newly vaccinated and their relieved relatives.

Through late February the initiative was responsible for delivering 5,466 shots in the city, where a relatively high 17 percent of its 92,000 residents are 65 and over, including hundreds of Holocaust survivors. That’s on top of other vaccinations being arranged by hospitals and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, in the area.

“We’re not responding with lights and sirens, but we are responding to a

need in the community,” Fire Chief Virgil Fernandez said. “For many of the vulnerable, we’re the first line of defense.”

The initiative began to take shape well before vaccines were even available. Early last fall, Division Chief Digna Abello started pushing for the fire department to rent a freezer that could store the Pfizer vaccine at the required ultra-cold temperatures, on the assumption that it would be approved and the department’s 200 firefighters, all trained paramedics, could help distribute it.

The program now up and running since January, each day, amid a mountain of neatly organized paperwork in her office at the fire station, she manually keys into the state database each vaccine delivered by the firefighters and the nurses that now accompany them, using a data entry system she created.

“It’s easier to look the other way. But if we have the capabilities ...” Abello said, her voice trailing off. The 38-year-old mother self-assigns tasks that often keep her at the station until 2 a.m., such as procuring the most efficient syringes that waste as little of the precious vaccines as possible.

“Every drop has to be accounted for,” said fire Capt. Mark Schwartz, who loads the vials in bags of ice for daily deliveries and has configured his phone to alert him to any temperature changes in the department’s vaccine freezers.

“The first time we had 1,000 thousand doses,” Schwartz said, “I couldn’t sleep – ‘I’ve got 1,000 of

what everybody wants!’”

The biggest challenge was to get the shots to the people who needed them most and had the greatest difficulty navigating online registrations or mass vaccination sites – like a 96-year-old man who’s unable to leave his bed in a cramped apartment and got his second dose from Schwartz in mid-February.

Firefighters already have an “evacuation list” of people they need to get to safety during hurricanes. To go beyond that, they turned to temples and churches that minister to and are familiar with many of the neediest in the community. Rabbin and pastors draw up lists of those who need or have asked for help with a vaccine, for as soon as the doses become available.

One of them is Rabbi Mendy Levy of the Chabad Hasidic movement, who qualified to receive the vaccine due to his front-line work as a hospital chaplain and posted about it online immediately to encourage others.

“We have to be examples to the rest of the community,” he said.

Levy helps train health care providers who treat Holocaust survivors, some of whom can be retraumatized by triggers such as injections and white coats after being subjected to experiments carried out by doctors in concentration camps. It’s crucial that firefighters and nurses take the vaccines to a welcoming setting, such as a synagogue or a patient’s home, and visit with them and their families.

“Though it’s a trigger, so in general they are afraid, they recognize this is a

Pope’s visit to Iraq provides a needed reminder

As Pope Francis landed in Baghdad after the short flight from Rome, I was reviewing his words from an evening prayer service he held last March. That night, you could hear Italian ambulance sirens go by – this was no escape from the pandemic reality we were all facing.

At the time, he said: “The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people’s souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and acting that supposedly ‘save’ us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity.”

He said a lot more and it’s worth rereading or rewatching. Obviously, particularly for Catholics,

Kathryn Lopez



but I suspect there’s something there for everyone. Certainly, it’s something to think about as we hit this one-year mark since shutdowns began.

The pope’s current trip to Iraq is the first trip he’s made since COVID-19 arrived, and the importance of the visit is not lost on the Christians in that troubled region. As far as they are concerned, all the interfaith dialogue aspects of the trip are secondary, important though they might be for the peace of the world and for their lives. The chief message of the pope’s trip is that Christians in the Middle East are not forgotten – something that doesn’t always seem true, especially in the United States. I frequently find that Amer-

icans don’t even realize that there are Christians in Iraq anymore.

And yet, what do the Christians of Iraq want? The night before the pope’s arrival, the National Review Institute hosted a Zoom briefing live from Erbil with Stephen Rasche, an American who serves as the vice chancellor of the Catholic University of Erbil and director of the Institute for Ancient and Threatened Christianity there. He said of Iraqi Christians: First of all, they want to be able to remain where they are. But they “don’t just want to be treated well. They want to be able to serve.”

“They want homes,” he said. “They want jobs. They want laws to protect them. They want to the ability to celebrate and live their lives freely and openly. And they hope that this visit from the Holy Father is a starting point

for that.”

Pope Francis has been talking about persecuted Christians since the beginning of his pontificate. He’s repeatedly said that there are more now than in the days of the early Church, when they were sent to the lions. His trip to Iraq is for the Christians – as their population there dwindles and their ability to continue to be a presence in their ancestral home is uncertain.

It’s also a reproof of our self-centeredness. Yes, so many here have suffered this year in real ways. But as things open up again, what’s most important to us? Throughout the pandemic, we seemed to concede that religion was not essential. But religion is all the Christians of Iraq have. The people Rasche serves in Erbil are there because they had to flee their homes in other parts of the country. I once

heard a woman there declare that she was grateful for the terrorist group ISIS, which seeks to drive Christians from the Middle East through murder and violence – thank God for ISIS, she said. Because before ISIS, she didn’t know that Christ was most important to her.

Amazing. Can this papal trip provide perspective for us? To remind us to serve, not be served; to love, not descend deeper into hate; to be unafraid; and to truly value the gifts of freedom we have in the United States still? And to remember what is most essential.

Kathryn Jean Lopez is senior fellow at the National Review Institute, editor-at-large of National Review magazine and author of the new book “A Year With the Mystics: Visionary Wisdom for Daily Living.” She is also chair of Cardinal Dolan’s pro-life commission in New York. She can be contacted at klopez@nationalreview.com.

Man gets 16 years after student eats tainted candy

TERRE HAUTE (AP) — A western Indiana man has received a 16-year sentence in a case where a student at a local school became ill after eating drug-laced candy.

A Vigo County judge ordered Levi Dowden, 22, of Terre Haute on Monday to serve 10 years of his sentence in prison followed by one year of work release and five years on formal probation.

Dowden pleaded guilty last fall to felony charges of aiding in dealing methamphetamine, aiding in dealing cocaine, aiding in dealing a look-a-like substance and dealing in marijuana, the Tribune-Star reported.

He was originally charged with 18 criminal counts involving drugs and firearms following an investigation that began in February 2019 when a Vigo County schools student became ill after eating a gummy candy that had reportedly been laced with Xanax.

That student was released from the hospital after treatment, police said at the time.

Royal family says Harry, Meghan racism charges ‘concerning’

By **DANICA KIRKA**

Associated Press

LONDON — Buckingham Palace said Tuesday that allegations of racism made earlier this week by Prince Harry and Meghan were “concerning” and would be addressed privately by the royal family.

The comments, made in a statement issued on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II, are the first from the palace since the two-hour television interview with Meghan and Harry rocked the royal family. Meghan, who is biracial, said the palace had failed to help her when she had suicidal thoughts and that an unidentified member of the royal family had raised “concerns” about the color of her baby’s skin when she was pregnant with her son, Archie.

“The whole family is saddened to learn the full extent of how challenging the last few years have been for Harry and Meghan,” the palace said. “The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. While some recollections may vary, they are taken very

seriously and will be addressed by the family privately.”

The interview, conducted by Oprah Winfrey and which aired Sunday night in the U.S. and a day later in Britain, has divided people around the world. While many say the allegations demonstrate the need for change inside a palace that hasn’t kept pace with the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, others have criticized Harry and Meghan for dropping their bombshell while Harry’s 99-year-old grandfather, Prince Philip, remains hospitalized in London after a heart procedure.

Anna Whitelock, a professor of history and director of the Centre for the Study of Modern Monarchy at Royal Holloway, University of London, said the palace’s brief message was an effort to quiet the controversy.

“It’s not very long, but it’s very precise and it has a clear intent – and that is to close this down as a family matter; to make clear that this is clearly a family in crisis, that there’s family issues to sort out, but to

separate this very clearly from any criticism or discussion about the institution of monarchy itself,” she told The Associated Press. “And I think time will tell whether that’s a distinction that the public will accept.”

While the palace often tries to stay above controversy by remaining silent and riding out the storm, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’s charges proved so damaging that the family was forced to respond.

The response was likely delayed by the queen’s struggle to balance her sometimes-conflicting roles as monarch and grandmother, said Angela Levin, author of “Harry, a Biography of a Prince,” before the statement was released. During past crises, the 94-year-old monarch has usually come down on the side of the 1,000-year-old institution she has led since 1952.

“The queen has a motto: Never complain, never explain,” Levin told the AP. “And she’s stuck with this for decades. But I think in this climate and 2021, everything goes everywhere. There’s so much social media that in this instance, she

really can’t not say anything.”

Harry and Meghan married in May 2018 in a ceremony at Windsor Castle that ended with a ride around the town in a horse-drawn carriage. In the early days of their marriage, the couple were seen as the fresh young face of the monarchy for an increasingly multicultural nation.

But the story quickly turned sour. The couple stepped away from royal duties last year and moved to California, saying they wanted to escape racist coverage and unwanted intrusions on their privacy by the British media.

During the interview, Meghan described feeling so isolated and miserable inside the royal family that she had suicidal thoughts, yet when she asked for mental health assistance from the palace’s human resources staff, she was told they couldn’t help because she wasn’t a paid employee. She also said Harry told her there were “concerns and conversations” about how dark Archie’s skin would be.

Winfrey later said Har-

ry told her off camera that the family member wasn’t Queen Elizabeth II or Prince Philip, sparking a flurry of speculation about who it could be.

Harry also revealed that the stresses the couple endured had ruptured relations with his father, Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, and his brother, Prince William, illuminating the depth of the family divisions that led the couple to step away from royal duties and move to California last year.

But the most explosive issue was race. The royal family has tried to address that head on, although the rest of the discussion is likely to take place in private, Whitelock said.

“I’m sure there will be a lot of soul searching within the royal family, but this is going to be very much behind closed doors and we’re not going to see dramatic statements, dramatic changes,” she said. “This is going to be about a family who are going to have to look at themselves and reflect on what’s happened and what needs to happen and what needs to change.”

PULSE

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chance to make your voice heard and have your questions answered is fast approaching. Each session will be held from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on various selected days in the auditorium at Wabash Middle School (WMS), 150 Colerain St. Dates for the work sessions include Wednesday, March 10 for staff at Wabash High School (WHS); and Thursday, March 11 for members of the community.

Second Harvest to hold tailgate food distributions

Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana has planned tailgate food distributions for 1 p.m. Wednesday, March 10 at Manchester Church of the Brethren, 1306 Beckley St., North Manchester; and 11 a.m. Wednesday, March 24 at Bachelor Creek Church of Christ, 2147 Indiana 15. For more information, visit www.curehunger.org, classy.org/campaign/hunger-action-month/c29 9182 or <https://www.givepulse.com/group/203410>.

Manchester University Virtual Career Fair set for Wednesday

The virtual career fair is 1 to 3 p.m. Wednesday, March 10 on Handshake, an online platform that helps students connect with potential employers. This fair is for undergraduate students from the North Manchester campus. Register by visiting <https://link.manchester.edu/career>

fair or email Career Development@manchester.edu.

Salute to Ag Dinner planned for March 10

The 2021 Salute to Ag Dinner will take place at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 10 at the Heartland REMC building, 350 Wedcor Ave. Tickets are \$20 each and sponsorship opportunities are available ranging from \$100 to \$2,500. For more information, visit growwabashcounty.com/ag2021 or email marketing@growwabashcounty.com or call 260-563-5258.

Southwood, Metro North Kindergarten Round-Ups announced

Children who will be at least five years of age on or before Aug. 1 are eligible to participate in kindergarten for the 2021-2022 school year. Southwood Elementary will host their Round-Up on Wednesday, March 10, and Metro North Elementary will hold theirs on Thursday, March 11. To register, visit www.msdlc.k12.in.us. For more information about Southwood Elementary School, email Principal Phil Boone at boonepr@msdlc.k12.in.us. For more information about Metro North Elementary School, email Principal Janette Moore at moorej@msdlc.k12.in.us.

Visit Wabash County plans annual St. Trolley’s Day Tour

Visit Wabash County has announced tickets are on sale for the annual St.

Trolley’s Day Tour set for Saturday, March 13. The St. Trolley’s Day Tour is \$30 per person, due at registration, and is all-inclusive for those 21 and older. To register, visit www.VisitWabashCounty.com/trolley-tours, visit 221 S. Miami St. or call 260-563-7171.

INDOT, city meeting seeks public input on proposed East Street bridge

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) along with the city will be hosting two events to inform residents and solicit feedback about a proposed Local Trax Railroad Grade Separation project to build a pedestrian and vehicle bridge over the railroad tracks on East Street. An in-person public open house hosted from 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 16, at the Eagles Theater’s in the fourth-floor ballroom, 106 W. Market St. For more information, visit www.cityofwabash.com/traxproject.

Wabash County Animal Shelter partnership to pair emerging readers with dogs, cats

The local Literacy for Companionship program will be held on the third Thursday of each month, starting March 18 at the Wabash County Animal Shelter, 810 Manchester Ave. The time will be split into 30-minute shifts from 4 to 6 p.m., with four children scheduled per session. There is no cost for the program and the parents or guardians will be with the

children at all times. For more information, call 260-563-3511.

WACT plans spring comedy

Performances of “Play On!” by Rick Abbot and directed by Brett Robinson have been scheduled for the weekend of Friday, April 30 through Sunday, May 2 at Southwood Jr.-Sr. High School, 564 Indiana 124. For more information, email brett.a.robinson1@outlook.com.

Grow Wabash County hosting Process Communication workshop

Registration is now open for Grow Wabash County’s Process Communication Model (PCM) workshop scheduled for Monday, May 3 through Wednesday, May 5, at the Grow Wabash County office. Tuition for the workshop will be \$600. The tuition fee will cover the participant’s course fees, an in-depth personalized PCM profile, and snacks and meals throughout the workshop. Those interested or representatives for their companies can do so at www.growwabashcounty.com/pcm workshop or by contacting Grow Wabash County by email info@growwabashcounty.com or by phone at 260-563-5258.

COVID-19 testing continues at Parkview Wabash

OptumServe will administer free COVID-19 testing from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays at

Parkview Wabash Hospital “on an on-going basis.” Testing will take place at 8 John Kissinger Drive in the first-floor conference room of the Medical Office Building (MOB) adjoining Parkview Wabash Hospital. Testing site patrons should not use the MOB entrance or enter through the hospital, but instead, enter and exit through the designated entrance between the two buildings. Signage will mark the appropriate entrance, which is within a few steps of the conference room and testing site.

DivorceCare meets Tuesdays

DivorceCare, a 13-week DVD series sponsored by Wabash Friends Counseling Center, features some of the nation’s foremost Christian experts on topics concerning divorce and recovery, according to group leader Janet Quillen. The support group meets at 6:30 p.m. every Tuesday in the Conference Room in the Wabash Friends Counseling Center, 3563 South State Road 13. Wearing a mask is required when entering. Quillen and members of the group meet for dinner at 5:30 p.m. at Subway, 1812 S. Wabash St., on State Road 15. For more information, call 260-563-8453, 877-350-1658, email office@wabashfriends.org, call 260-571-5235 or visit www.divorcecare.org.

Editor’s note: If you have an upcoming event to submit, please send it by email to news@wabashplaindealer.com no later than five days before the event itself. Please use complete sentences, Associated Press style and Microsoft Word or PDF file formats.

Rob Burgess, Wabash Plain Dealer editor, may be reached by email at rburgess@wabashplaindealer.com.

Happy campers: More overnight camps to reopen this summer

By DAVID SHARP
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — There are going to be more happy campers this summer as more camps choose to reopen despite the pandemic, providing millions more kids an opportunity to gather around a campfire.

Most camp directors sat out last summer as the virus raged across the country, either because of state restrictions that barred them from opening or because of concerns about keeping kids healthy. But with cases declining and more people vaccinated each day, many are feeling more confident about reopening this season.

Parents are currently scrambling to get their kids signed up before slots are filled in many states like Maine, where at least 100 overnight camps will be open. But some states have yet to release their operating guidelines.

In New York, Andrew and Alyssa Klein held their son and daughter out of camp last year. But this summer they're letting them go to a camp in Maine.

"We have to figure out a way to live our lives safely," said Andrew Klein. "We can't live in a cocoon. We did that for a year. I'm ready to emerge and I'm ready for my family to emerge, as safely as we can."

Several states like New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey that banned overnight camps last summer have changed their tune. Across the country, at least 45 states are allowing overnight camps to open, compared to 39 states last summer, according to the American Camp Association.

"Camps are really gearing up to operate as fully as possible. They know that campers and staff need this experience," said Tom Rosenberg, from the ACA.

Most of the overnight camps that did remain open last summer mostly operated successfully, creating their own "bubbles" and emphasizing safety by grouping kids in cohorts, mandating masks and social distancing indoors, and imposing lots of hand washing. Many required kids to quarantine or to be tested before arrival.

But there were a few notable outbreaks. More than 250 people were infected at a camp in Georgia, and more than 80 people were infected at a camp in Missouri, for example.

Parents who have seen their kids isolated from friends and spending too much time indoors are ea-

ger to give their kids some sense of normalcy.

"Given all that kids have gone through, it's an amazing opportunity for them that gives them a glimpse of normal life in a world that's far from normal," said Elisabeth Mischel, of Short Hills, New Jersey, who's sending her two boys, 11 and 13, to camp in Maine.

The situation is much improved from last summer, which was a devastating financial loss for the camping industry with more than 80 percent of overnight camps closed for the season. Overnight camps were estimated to lose \$16 billion in revenue with more than \$4.4 billion in lost wages and more than 900,000 lost jobs, Rosenberg said.

Most of the roughly 9,000 overnight camps weathered the storm thanks to federal aid including Paycheck Protection Program loans. But there are about 60 fewer camps than before the pandemic, the ACA said.

Despite all the worries last year, many parents served as pioneers in electing to continue the camp tradition.

In Texas, Megan Considine and her husband loaded up their son and daughter in an RV for the long trip to Maine. Her kids were out of shape after spending too much time indoors, and in front of screens.

"We thought that having our kids at summer camp in Maine was far safer than being at home. It was safer physically and mentally. They needed to get outside and to get exercise," she said.

Ken Block, from Weston, Massachusetts, said it was a no-brainer in hindsight but that there was a great deal of trepidation last summer.

"I can't begin to tell you how good it was for my son's mental and physical health, and his childhood," she said. This summer, she'll be sending two of her three sons to camp.

This summer, COVID-19 tests are more readily available, a bonus for camp directors, even as concerns grow about emerging strains of the virus. Vaccinations, for now, are limited to adults, not kids.

At Camp Winnebago in Maine, owner Andy Lilienthal said camp directors know how to keep kids safe — there were no infections at his camp last summer — and they'll make adjustments needed to carry on.

His biggest concern at this point is that there's so much demand amid worries about the emotional toll the pandemic is taking on kids. "It makes me sad to turn people away," he said.

COVID-19 bill checks off long list of Democratic goals; too many, Republicans say

By DAVID LAUTER
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

WASHINGTON Republicans call the massive COVID relief package making its way through Congress a "liberal wish list." Increasingly, Democratic lawmakers and the Biden administration have decided to own that.

One measure of the bill's sweep is a host of provisions Democrats have long sought — on topics including health insurance premiums, child care and pensions — that would amount to major pieces of legislation on their own. As part of the nearly \$1.9-trillion package, however, they've gotten little public attention, overshadowed by debate over who would receive \$1,400 direct-relief checks and whether the bill would increase the minimum wage.

For weeks as the bill moved through Congress, officials emphasized President Biden's openness to bipartisan negotiations. Now, with the congressional journey almost finished — the House is expected to vote on final passage as early as Wednesday — the White House tone has shifted. Officials are more willing to crow about Democratic goals achieved.

The relief package is "one of the most consequential and most progressive pieces of legislation in American history," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Monday.

Republicans hope the size and sprawling nature of the measure will, over time, boomerang on Democrats. The GOP has been nearly unanimous in criticizing it.

Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah), for example, has broken with his party on some issues — one of a handful of Republican senators to do so. But on the COVID bill, he has stuck to the party line, calling the measure "massively excessive."

House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, of California, denounced the bill in a floor speech as "the single most expensive spending bill ever."

"Almost every one of this bill's 592 pages includes a liberal pipedream that pre-dates the pandemic," McCarthy said.

Democrats, however, see little downside in delivering on long-promised goals. The bill aims squarely at the middle- and lower-income Americans Biden promised in his campaign that he would help, they note. And although many of the goals predate the pandemic, the emergency has made the problems more pressing, they argue.

The fact that even many of the less-debated provisions in the bill are consequential bolsters their case, Democrats say.

"When lesser-talked-about



Drew Angerer / Getty Images / TNS

U.S. President Joe Biden walks toward reporters on his way to Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 in Washington, D.C.

provisions still have the power to make major, material differences in the lives of those who are struggling at the hands of this pandemic or those who have started from steps behind, that's when you know you are on the right path," Rep. Richard E. Neal (D-Mass.), chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, said in a statement.

The bill provides a sharp contrast to the main economic bill passed during the Trump years — the 2017 tax cut.

Both measures had similar price tags. But the Republican bill showered nearly half its benefits on households in the top 5 percent of incomes — those making about \$308,000 or more in 2017. Backers said that approach would spur economic growth. The economy had a growth spurt in 2018, but by 2019, growth returned to roughly the same level as before the tax bill passed.

The Democratic bill, by contrast, would send about 70 percent of its benefits to those earning \$91,000 or less — the bottom three-fifths of the nation's income distribution, according to a new analysis by the Tax Policy Center, a nonpartisan Washington think tank. Benefits for families make up about half the cost of the legislation.

For those in the lowest fifth — with earnings of less than \$25,000 — the legislation would increase take-home income by 20 percent, the analysis shows.

The direct-relief checks provide a big part of that flow of money.

Another major source is the bill's expansion of federal aid to families with children, a measure that would cut child poverty nearly in half. Backers in Congress have doggedly pursued that goal for nearly two decades.

The measure, which would last for one year, would cost roughly \$110 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Biden said

last week that he favored Democratic efforts to make the changes permanent, which they're expected to push later this year.

Another provision would expand the number of middle-class Americans who can get help with the cost of health insurance under the Affordable Care Act — the first expansion of the 2010 healthcare law after years of Republican-led repeal efforts.

The expansion "checks a big item off the Democrats' agenda for reinvigorating the Affordable Care Act," said Larry Levitt, vice president for health policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation. "It's not the sum total of President Biden's healthcare agenda, but it's a significant down payment."

Currently, the law provides help to people to pay for premiums when they purchase insurance on the Obamacare marketplaces. But in order to hold down the cost of the law, it was written so that those subsidies went only to consumers with incomes of up to four times the federal poverty level, or about \$51,000. Those earning more than that have to pay the full cost of their premiums, except in a few states, including California, that partially offset those costs.

The new law would end that sharp cutoff. Consumers could get help if premiums cost more than 8.5 percent of their incomes. According to a Kaiser Foundation analysis, most of the benefit would go to consumers with incomes between \$51,000 and \$100,000, especially people in their 50s and 60s, who tend to have higher insurance costs.

For many, the savings could amount to hundreds of dollars a month.

The provision, which would cover the next two years, would cost about \$34 billion, the budget office estimates. As with the child tax credit, the administration and

congressional Democrats probably will try to make it permanent.

Still another part of the law would pump \$24 billion into a fund to stabilize the child-care industry, which lost some 200,000 jobs during the course of the last year, according to a recent report from researchers at UC Berkeley.

"This is a sector that struggled" even before COVID, said Lea Austin of Berkeley's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, "but it's been devastated by the pandemic."

Child-care centers have struggled with higher costs for cleaning supplies and protective gear, she said, even as the pandemic has caused many parents to lose their jobs and be unable to pay for care. In California, one in five child-care providers reported in July that they had missed at least one mortgage payment, Austin said.

Biden's bill would provide \$24 billion to keep child-care facilities afloat, including money to help pay workers who, nationwide, earn an average of less than \$12 per hour. The bill would also expand the existing tax credit that families can use to offset the cost of care for a child or dependent, raising the amount of the credit and making it available to more people.

"It's going to plug a hole that's really been gushing over the last year," Austin said.

The legislation would also break a decade-long logjam in Congress over the fate of pension plans that cover more than 1 million union workers, retirees and their surviving spouses, including hundreds of thousands of drivers represented by the Teamsters, but also miners, grocery workers, hotel employees and musicians covered by pension plans that were battered by the Great Recession and changes in their industries.

When to expect payments, other benefits from relief package

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL
AP Personal Finance Writer

Relief checks

As the latest federal pandemic relief package makes its way to President Joe Biden's desk, Americans may be wondering when the benefits will reach them.

The \$1.9 trillion known as the "American Rescue Plan" is massive, both in size and scope. It includes direct payments to most Americans, aid to small businesses, financial help for schools and much more to help the country recover from the financial ravages of the pandemic.

The house is expected to give its final approval early this week and then it heads to Biden for his signature. The timing of its passage is crucial — most notably because some pandemic unemployment benefits will be coming to an end on Sunday.

Millions of taxpayers could begin see direct benefits almost immediately, some later this month and others taking several months to accomplish.

Here's you need to know about the main planks of the spending plan:

The legislation provides a direct payment of \$1,400 for a single taxpayer, or \$2,800 for a married couple that files jointly, plus \$1,400 per dependent. Individuals earning up to \$75,000 would get the full amount, as would married couples with incomes up to \$150,000.

The size of the check would shrink for those making slightly more, with a hard cut-off at \$80,000 for individuals and \$160,000 for married couples.

Biden estimates that 85 percent of Americans will be eligible for the payment. Some groups that were not eligible for prior payments — such as dependent college students and disabled adults — are now eligible.

Biden said the goal is to send out the payments starting this month.

"That means the mortgage can get paid. That means the child can stay in community college. That means maintaining the health insurance you have," Biden said. "It's going to make a big difference in so many of lives in this country."

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday that the administration is doing everything in its power to expedite payments. As such, the Treasury is working to get more payments to taxpayers by direct deposit. The agency will be able to send direct deposit payments to those who have their information on file from 2019 or 2020 tax filings or who provided it through other programs.

Biden's signature will not appear on the checks, a move his predecessor made that was criticized as a delay in getting payments out.

A new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that 30 percent of Americans say their current household income remains lower than it was when the pandemic began.

The IRS and the Treasury Department began to issue the last round of payments by both direct deposit and check in only a matter of days after the outlays became law in late December.

Unemployment

Expanded unemployment benefits from the feder-

al government would be extended through Sept. 6 at \$300 a week. That's on top of payments from state unemployment insurance program.

Despite a modest recovery, millions of Americans remain unemployed. The plan would also extend two key pandemic programs, which benefit about 11.8 million Americans.

These pandemic unemployment benefits were set to expire Sunday, so if there is a delay in the bill's passage there could be a gap in benefits. But the National Employment Law Project anticipates if things are finalized this week, states and existing beneficiaries likely won't see any interruption in payments.

The first \$10,200 of jobless benefits would be non-taxable for households with incomes under \$150,000 but only for benefits from 2020. The IRS will have to issue guidelines on how to put this into practice.

Additionally, the measure provides a 100 percent subsidy of COBRA health insurance premiums to ensure that the laid-off workers can remain on their

employer health plans at no cost from April 1 through the end of September.

Tax breaks

The package contains a number of valuable tax breaks. One of the most notable is an increase in the tax credit that taxpayers can claim for dependent children.

Under current law, most taxpayers can reduce their federal income tax bill by up to \$2,000 per child. The bill would increase the tax break to \$3,000 for every child age 6 to 17 and \$3,600 for every child under the age of 6.

Families would get the full credit regardless of how little they make in a year.

The aim is to deliver the money, which is an advance payment on the tax credit, in smaller monthly payments instead of one larger lump sum.

The exact timing of when this money would arrive is still unclear. If the Treasury determines that a monthly payment isn't feasible, then the payments are to be made as frequently as possible.

Elaine Maag, principal

research associate in the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, said monthly payments could begin as soon as July but if the government opts for a quarterly payments it take until could fall.

Add in the \$1,400 checks and other items in the proposal, and the legislation would reduce the number of children living in poverty by more than half, according to the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University.

The bill also significantly expands the Earned Income Tax Credit for 2021 by making it available to people without children. The credit for low and moderate-income adults would be worth \$543 to \$1,502, depending on income and filing status.

The benefit of the EITC would not be felt until taxpayers file their returns for the 2021 tax year, which would typically be in the beginning of 2022.

The plan does not include student loan forgiveness, but it does allow for any income from the forgiveness of student loans be tax-free from 2021 through 2025.

Brother is alarmed by teen sister’s dangerous choices

DEAR ABBY: A few weeks ago, my 14-year-old sister snuck out and had sex with a boy she met on Snapchat. I know this because my distraught mother decided to tell me.

My sister lied to my parents repeatedly about it, but later, when they went through her phone, they found explicit images that a girl her age should never have. Furthermore, after they confiscated her phone, she acquired a new one from a friend and continues to message boys through Snapchat. She continues to lie to my parents when they ask her if she’s communicating with anyone.

She has been hanging around a toxic group of girls at school, and she’s very impressionable. She isn’t a bad person, but all this lying has left me confused and upset. What can I do to help her? — Her Worried Brother In Georgia

DEAR BROTHER: The age of consent in Georgia is 16. Do your parents know the identity and age of the person your sister met on Snapchat? The inappropriate pictures your parents discovered on her phone could be considered child pornography, and there are laws against it.

It’s very important that your sister understand how dangerous what she has been doing is. Because the peer group she has chosen to follow is undesirable, it would be better if your sister was removed from that influence and home-schooled or transferred to a different school. Please suggest this to your parents.

DEAR ABBY: My best friend, “Betsy,” died suddenly a week ago. She was only 58, and I am devastated. She was the most upbeat, positive person I have ever known.

A year ago, a new neighbor, “Claudia,” moved across the street. I befriended her and introduced Claudia to Betsy a couple of months ago. They met twice and texted each other a few times. I was pleased, thinking we could have a girl’s night out once in a while.

After Betsy died, I heard Claudia has been telling people her “best friend” had died. The day before, she told me she barely knew Betsy. Claudia also said that at least now she didn’t have to share me!

I am appalled that this woman is trying to co-opt my grieving for my dearest friend and make it her own. How do I deal with this? — Sorrowful In Washington

DEAR SORROWFUL: I am sorry for the loss of your best friend. People who knew you and Betsy know how close you were. Claudia may have said what she did in order to gain sympathy or attention.

Your grief is your own. No one can steal it from you. Claudia may be insecure or jealous of the closeness you shared with Betsy. Now that you know what kind of person Claudia is, act accordingly.

DEAR ABBY: Do you feel the words “cool” and “perfect” are way overused and should be retired indefinitely? — Curious In California

DEAR CURIOUS: No, but if you do, I’m perfectly cool with it.

How about overused words like “huge,” “awesome” and “epic”? And is everything and everyone truly “AMAZING”? See what you have started? Somebody hand me a thesaurus.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Dear Abby



CROSSWORD

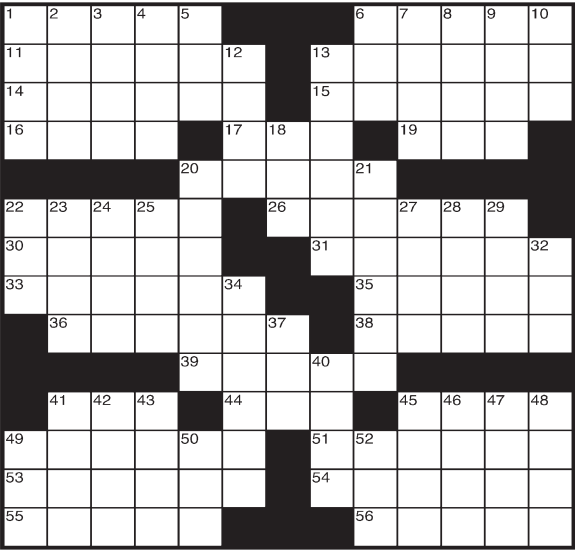
ACROSS

- 1 Each
- 6 Den
- 11 Rodeo rope
- 13 Dreadful
- 14 New York cagers
- 15 Chemical compounds
- 16 Strive for
- 17 Stroke
- 19—down roots
- 20 Drained of color
- 22 Fictional orphan
- 26 Pussyfoots
- 30 Not over
- 31 Looks happy
- 33 Place for shadow
- 35 Gloomy
- 36 Slumbering
- 38 Untrusting
- 39 Damp
- 41 Apprehend a suspect
- 44 Corporate exec
- 45 Con
- 49 Spanish dance

- 51 Stay
- 53 King Arthur’s island
- 54 Marbles
- 55 Caribbean nation
- 56 Scrooge’s visitor

DOWN

- 1 Antlered animals
- 2 Barn topper
- 3 Pennsylvania port
- 4 Lisa’s love
- 5 Idle chatter
- 6 Beantown team
- 7 Game show prize
- 8 Pakistan’s language
- 9 Low-cal
- 10 Fabric meas.
- 12 Recipe
- 13 Suite
- 15 Suite providers
- 18 Codgers’ queries
- 20 More open
- 21 Quickly
- 22 Tone
- 23 New Age singer
- 24 Dangerous March date
- 25 Wooded hollow
- 27 World’s longest river
- 28 “Fish” artist
- 29 Char
- 32 Pilot’s milieu
- 34 Church official
- 37 Cobbler
- 40 Ibsen woman
- 41 Astronomer’s sighting
- 42 Tien Shan mountains
- 43 Wallop
- 45 Far East nanny
- 46 Peace-keeping org.
- 47 Binds
- 48 Scholarly org.
- 49 “—, humbug!”
- 50 French monarch
- 52 It may be hard-boiled



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SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ☆☆☆☆☆

2	8		5	1	7	4		
7		3		2	4			
		1		8				9
		4		3		2	5	
	3	7		4		6		
3				9		5		
			3	5		8		7
		5	4	7	2		6	3

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How to play: Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9.

PREVIOUS SOLUTION								
9	8	3	1	4	2	7	5	6
4	5	7	3	8	6	9	1	2
1	2	6	7	5	9	3	4	8
3	6	9	2	7	4	5	8	1
5	1	4	8	6	3	2	9	7
8	7	2	5	9	1	6	3	4
7	9	5	6	1	8	4	2	3
2	4	8	9	3	7	1	6	5
6	3	1	4	2	5	8	7	9

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

MOCAE

SUPAE

CYTIKS

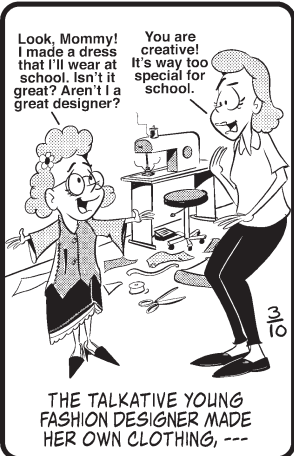
PMASYW

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

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THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



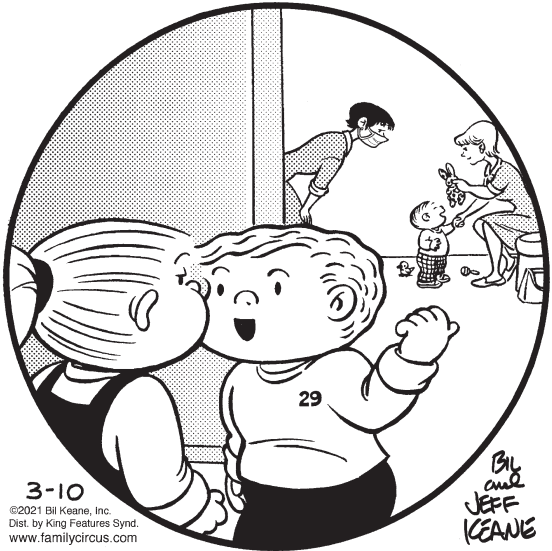
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: LEGAL TEETH SMOOTH CAMPUS Answer: To quickly sell last season's fashions, the boutique had a — "CLOTHES-OUT" SALE

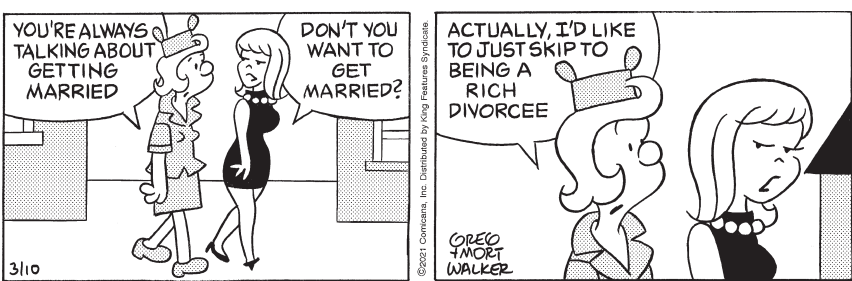
THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

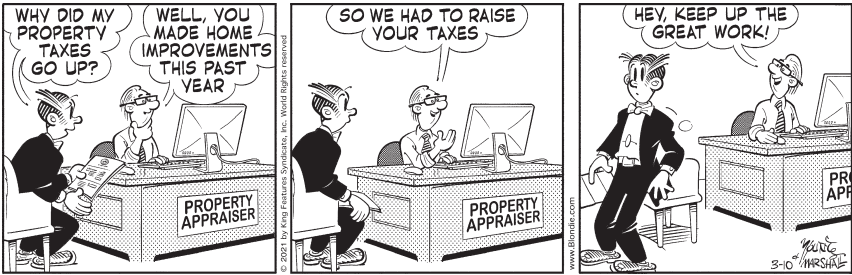


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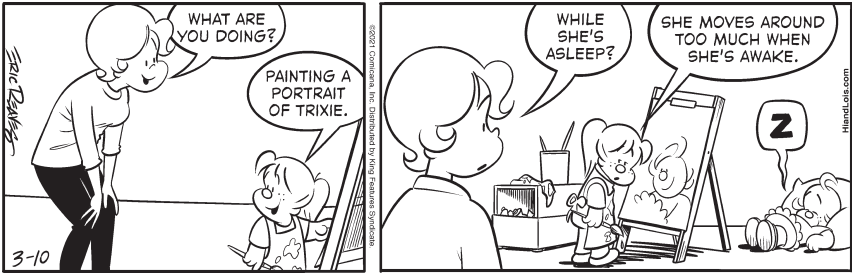
BEEBLE BAILEY



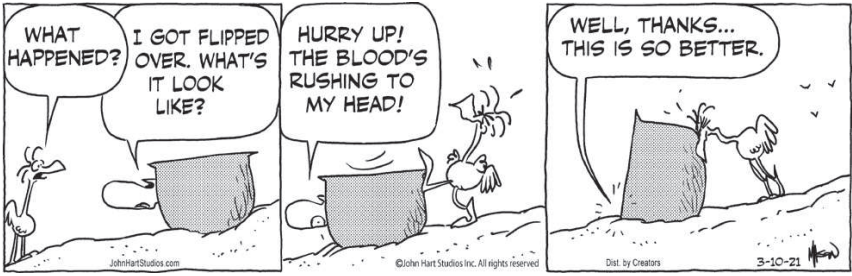
BLONDIE



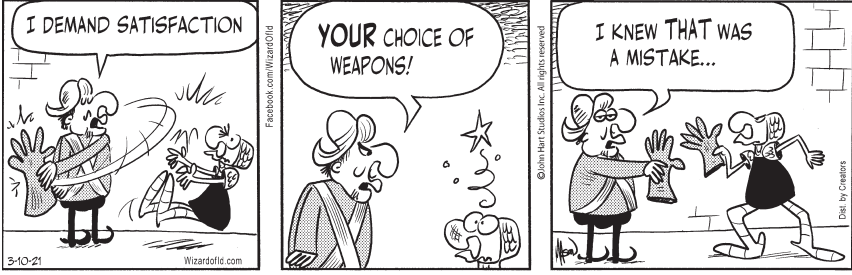
HI & LOIS



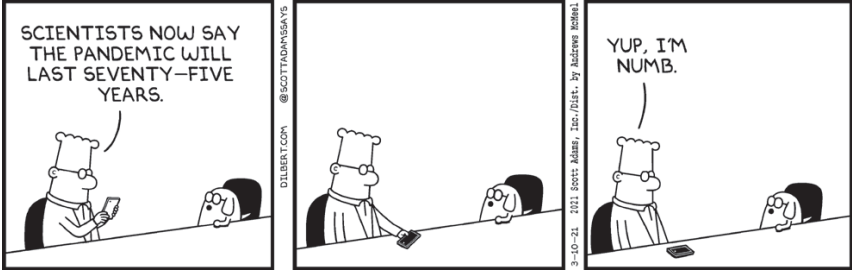
BC



WIZARD OF ID



DILBERT



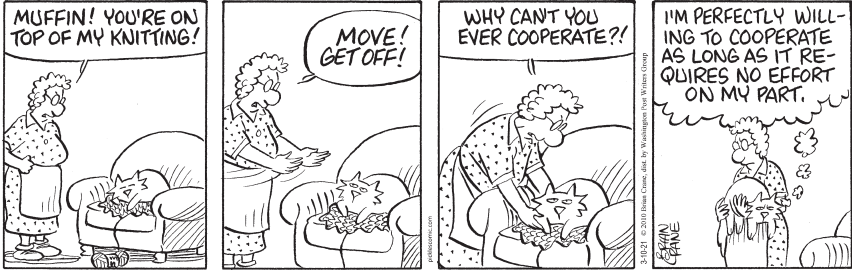
GARFIELD



FORT KNOX



PICKLES



Temptation is a very powerful thing

From the writings of the Rev. Billy Graham

Q: For the Christian what’s the difference between Satan tempting us and God testing us? — T.T.

A: Temptation is a very powerful thing. Scripture says that mankind is in spiritual warfare and that enemies have power and skill to tempt us. This is why the Bible warns us to flee temptation and not give Satan a foothold (James 4:7; Ephesians 4:27). But often people do not stop to think about that and do not call on the Name of the Lord to keep them from temptation. Many people believe that when they come to know Christ they will never encounter temptation, but when it comes they are unprepared and in conflict. Sometimes there is a yielding to temp-

tation that leads to discouragement and remorse. The devil tempts and God tests. The Bible says that God allows Satan to tempt us but God uses it as a test often to reveal how weak the flesh is. God does not want us to depend on our own strength to flee temptation; He wants us to depend totally and completely on Him. Spiritual conflict is at work in the heart of every believer. It is true that the Christian possesses a new nature; but the old sin nature is still there and this is why it is vi-

tal to yield to the new nature which Christ dominates, and we can only do this by His power and by calling on His name.

Every believer should commit to memory this wonderful passage: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

CELEBRITY CIPHER

Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another.

“WFO IPYT LGCCOZOPMO ROWJOOP
KO DPL KT COYYIJ DMWIZN GN WFDW
G’UO NVOPW KIZO WGKO GP EDGY.”
— ZIROZW KGWMFHK

Previous Solution: “I woke up one morning, and all of my stuff had been stolen and replaced by exact duplicates.” — Steven Wright

TODAY’S CLUE: J’s equals E

Opinion

SPEAK UP

How to contact your legislators:

U.S. Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind.
B33 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
1-202-224-5623
<http://young.senate.gov/contact>

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind.
B85 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-4814
<http://braun.senate.gov/>

U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-District 2
419 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-3915

State Sen. Andy Zay, R-District 17
Indiana Senate
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
1-800-382-9467
Senator.Zay@iga.in.gov

State Rep. Craig Snow, R-District 18
Indiana House
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
1-800-382-9841
h18@in.gov

To email any Indiana lawmaker, go to this website:
www.in.gov/cgi-bin/legislative/contact/contact.pl

LETTERS GUIDELINES

The Wabash Plain Dealer encourages your letters to the editor forum, which is designed to be a forum for exchange of ideas between readers about issues of community importance.

Please sign your letter. Your name will be used with the letter that is published in the Plain Dealer. Your letter will be returned if it is your desire to remain anonymous.

Since we may want to write or call you to verify the letter, we ask that you include your address and telephone number. All our letters to the editor are published in the interest of fair play, so we trust our letter writers will refrain from personal attacks on other persons or groups.

A letter should be less than two pages long, preferably of double-spaced typing.

In order to give everyone an opportunity to participate in this exchange of ideas, please try to limit your letters to one per month per household.

To submit a letter, please write the Wabash Plain Dealer at 99 W. Canal St., Wabash, IN 46992.

Letters also may be hand-delivered to the newspaper office, 99 W. Canal St. The office is open 9-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you should deliver a letter during non-business hours, a drop slot is located to the left of the front door. Letters may be faxed to 260-563-0816, or email them to news@wabashplaindealer.com with "Letters to the Editor" in the subject line.



DAILY SCRIPTURE

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

Dr. Seuss was part Horton the elephant, part Grinch

Read Across America Day was celebrated last Tuesday, as it is every year, on the birthday of the late Theodore Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. Yet neither the National Education Assn., which launched Read Across America Day, nor President Biden mentioned Geisel in their official proclamations last week.

Not coincidentally, that was the same day Dr. Seuss Enterprises, which preserves the author's legacy, announced that it would cease publication of six of Geisel's books because of racist wording and imagery, including the first book under his pen name, "And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street." The offending illustrations, which Geisel drew, included images of Chinese people in coolie hats and Black Africans with hoops through their noses.

The master of anapestic tetrameter for the early-reader set is under fire these days not just for problematic material in his children's books, but for advertisements in his earlier years that contained even crueler stereotypes of minorities.

And in his other children's books, human characters were almost always white. As a result, various groups have called for downgrading his prominence as a children's author.

Geisel also produced a body of work during the World War II era that was decidedly anti-isolationist and anti-racist – while at the same time showing terrible stereotypes of Japanese people.

It's tempting in these days of extreme reactions to reject an artist's entire oeuvre over shortcomings as a person or as an artist – and for a backlash to be mounted against that rejection, claiming that this is so-called cancel culture attempting to limit speech.

But whatever Geisel's strengths and shortcomings were in his work outside of children's literature, the books themselves should stand and fall on their own. And most of them stand.

At the same time, Dr. Seuss Enterprises was right to stop publication of the six books. A great deal of noncontemporary literature involves plotting and characters

that would not be accepted in modern works. They remain classics in many cases because we as adults understand the context. But the standard should be different when we're talking about the kind of rhyming, colorfully illustrated books that very young children have read to them. They are exposed over and over – because as any parent knows, children want their favorite books repeated ad infinitum – to racist, inaccurate images and tilting wording that, for example, describes people with eyes "at a slant." If the books can't be fixed, they no longer deserve to be in print.

It's heartening to see a new generation of picture books expose children to a more diverse and inclusive sensibility. But let's not forget that Dr. Seuss was, in general, a treasure, and it's saddening to see Geisel's name left out of a day that was timed to honor his legacy. Books still matter. Fun still matters. At his best, which was often, Dr. Seuss combined them.

This story originally appeared in Los Angeles Times.



Teacher pay is the symptom of deeper problems

The Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission released their report in mid-December. All Hoosiers should be interested in what it did and did not say about teacher pay, along with recommendations they offered. I begin with some stark observations about education finance.

After adjusting for inflation, Indiana spending per student is down more than 7.0 percent since 2010, and Indiana dropped from 22nd nationally in school spending per student in 2004 to 36th by 2018. It wasn't in the report, but school spending, as a share of Indiana's Gross Domestic Product, dropped from 2.6 to 2.2 percent since 2010. That means by last year we spent roughly \$1.3 billion less per year on education than we would have if we grew educational spending at the same rate as the overall economy in that same time period.



Michael Hicks

The Commission figured that the actual cuts to K-12 spending works out to about \$580 million per year. That is almost identical to the \$600 million they claim it would take to bring teacher pay back to 2010 levels. In other words, almost 97 percent of the reduction in educational funding came out of teacher's salaries. This should make clear two important facts. First, it is unlikely that there are excess savings hidden somewhere in school budgets. Second, the difficulty Hoosier schools have in recruiting teachers is not a supply-side problem. It is about pay.

The Commission also listed 37 policy or tax issues. Not all of these address teachers' pay. The most numerous recommendations were those that privatize local school services, reallocate money from one use to another or make lump-sum payments to pension plans. There were 13 of these recommendations, but the cost savings from these aren't clear. The Commission also recommended three administrative changes that had no dollars attached to them.

The Commission suggested five policies that would allow schools to achieve some economies of scale in purchasing goods or services. They offered three recommendations that would save

schools money by consolidation or outsourcing of staff. Six recommendations called for shifting spending from existing state or local taxes to school salaries. Two proposed cutting teacher benefits and using the savings for teacher salaries. Three recommendations involved increasing state and local spending on schools.

As best as I can tell, 35 recommendations in this study might free up \$50 million to \$100 million per year for teacher pay, though most of this comes from cutting teacher benefits. Commission members might dispute my estimates, but, with all due respect, I've written several technical studies and a book on cost savings from government and school consolidation. A potential \$100 million savings from implementing all these 35 steps is optimistic.

The bottom line is that, to get school spending per student back to 2010 levels, Hoosier taxpayers would need to spend an additional \$500 million or so on K-12 education each year. Even then, this would only get us back to where we were a decade ago and would leave teachers with fewer benefits.

The report was less forthright than it should have been about Indiana's decade of funding cuts to education. Even their gingerly treatment of that fact didn't prevent the report from being delayed until after the election. Also, the study claimed that Indiana's spending across 12 categories was not an outlier relative to other states. That is simply not true. In fact, Indiana spending is a full standard deviation below the national average in total spending, instructional spending, and student support spending. Indiana school spending is the very definition of an outlier.

Nonetheless, if you take time to read the full report and the footnotes, the problem is clear – we spend far too little on education. What the report hinted at is that this has deeper and longer-term impacts on Indiana. These were mostly buried deep in the footnotes. They should've been the first bullet point in the executive summary. I will be blunter. From 2010 to 2019, Indiana's worker productivity actually declined. That is the first time that has ever happened. As a consequence, our per capita personal income saw its largest relative decline in history. It is an unpleasant thing to say, but

the cause of this is the declining relative quality of our workforce.

Economists have understood for decades that human capital (really, the educational attainment of our workforce) is the strongest causal force in economic growth. Today, the share of adults who attend and complete college is the primary difference between regional wages and productivity. In that key metric, Indiana ranks 40th across states and territories. To put that in context, Tennessee ranks 39th and Puerto Rico ranks 41st, and both are actively improving. In contrast, Indiana's share of adults with a bachelor's degree declined in 2019. We are closer to Mississippi than the U.S. average, and we are heading downward.

The teacher salary problem is real, but it is only a symptom of a much wider and more pernicious problem. Indiana's policies towards education and training are failing. That failure is slowing our economy, and the poor decisions of the past decade will continue to bear bitter fruit for another decade. Our problem isn't just funding, which is too bad. That would be an easy remedy. Hoosiers are among the least taxed people in the developed world. We have plenty of room to better fund education. The problem is in how we approach workforce training, how we crowd K-12 instruction with dubious workforce preparation, how we incentivize public universities to attract out-of-state students, and most shamefully, how we ended the aspirational approach to education.

Indiana is failing at the single most important thing the state does to ensure a growing economy – educate our children and young adults. Our 'Mississippi Strategy' of low taxes, declining educational attainment and huge tax incentives to businesses is finally having an effect. It is precisely what an economic model would predict; declining relative wages, declining productivity and the need to offer even larger incentives to lure employers into our state. That isn't a strategy any Hoosier should be proud of supporting. But, it is certainly having an effect.

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

Raising the minimum wage is good business

By **MICHAEL O'CONNOR**

I'm a small business owner, and I strongly support raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2025. Paying employees wages they can live on is good business.

I own La Barberia, a full-service barber-shop with two locations in Pennsylvania. I know that if my employees aren't happy, my customers won't be happy.

We need to have a stable staff without a lot of turnovers. Customers count on seeing "their barber" when they come in. We don't want barbers leaving to make 50 cents or \$1 an hour more elsewhere.

The federal and Pennsylvania minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour comes to \$15,000 a year for full-time work. I can't imagine paying anyone \$7.25 an hour. It would send the message to employees that I don't care about you – or our customers.

At La Barberia, employees are our most important asset. We pay a decent salary that respects the craftsmanship and work ethic of our staff. Many of our employees have been with us for years – some for 40 years.

Some small business owners might call me lucky. But I call it smart business.

Employee turnover is disruptive, expensive and inefficient. Constantly hiring and training new staff slows down your business and costs time and money. It undercuts customer service.

With better pay, our employees stay with us, providing the great service that keeps our customers coming back and recommending us to others.

When the minimum wage goes up, businesses will see costly turnover go down.

Raising the minimum wage will also put more money in the pockets of local people, who spend it at local businesses like mine.

As I like to say, you can't spend it if you don't have it. If you work full-time and can't afford necessities like food and rent, you're probably going to skip your haircut.

I support legislation that would incrementally raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2025. I'm one of the hundreds of business owners from across the country who has signed a Business for a Fair Minimum Wage statement supporting an increase to \$15.

The minimum wage has been stuck at \$7.25 since 2009 – the longest period without a raise since the minimum wage was first enacted to help workers, businesses and the economy recover from the Great Depression.

Pennsylvania's neighbors all have minimum wages higher than \$7.25. Maryland, New Jersey and New York are on their way to a \$15 minimum wage already.

Before the pandemic hit, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York compared counties along both sides of the New York-Pennsylvania border to see the impact of New York raising its minimum wage while Pennsylvania stayed stuck at \$7.25. They looked at two industries with many lower-wage workers: retail trade and leisure & hospitality.

Contrary to what opponents of raising the minimum wage claim would happen, they found that wages went up in New York without negative effects on employment compared to Pennsylvania.

Raising the minimum wage will increase wages for many essential workers who aren't paid enough to cover their essentials. It will boost the customer spending we need at businesses like mine.

Raising the minimum wage will help us recover from the pandemic and strengthen our economy and our country.

Michael O'Connor is the co-owner of La Barberia, with locations in Philadelphia and Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, and a member of Business for a Fair Minimum Wage. This column was provided by American Forum and previously appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

LETTER

Hug your trees

My wife and I are habitual tree-huggers. We tend to all 24 of the trees on our property as often as possible, and they are wonderful trees. Back in 1978, our lot was devoid of all vegetation so we started planting trees soon after our house was constructed. We planted all of the trees in the first 10 years, including maples, birch, crab trees, willows and pines.

Unfortunately, many people today are not tree-huggers. They cut down trees to make room for additions, pools, play areas and the availability of sunshine. The chain saws are very active and the thunder of fallen trees is quite earth shattering.

What bothers us the most is the lack of concern for the environment. Trees cleanse the air by absorbing pollutants generated by the burning of fossil fuels. In particular, trees absorb carbon emissions and emit Oxygen. The more trees that come down the more carbon in the air, and the greater the pollution and health risk to the population.

We would love to see more tree hugging by people. Please save your trees and yourselves and plant more trees.

Donald Moskowitz
Londonderry, New Hampshire

Administrative

ing work of similar nature in a regulatory setting preferred. Must obtain a Class II Municipal Wastewater Treatment License and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management Laboratory Class II Certification. Before any offer of employment, the candidate must submit to a physical examination, drug test, and background check. The position includes an excellent wage and benefits package. Inquiries will be answered only during the interview process.

Administrative

Asst / HR Administrator or e-mail to btillettt@peruutilities.com Applications and complete job description can be found on Peru Utilities' website at www.peruutilities.com

Professional

Qualified applicants apply at Grant-Blackford Mental Health, Inc., 505 N. Wabash Ave., Marion, IN 46952 www.cornerstone.org EOE

General Help

The City of Marion will be accepting applications through Friday, March 12th, 2021 for the following position:

The City of Marion is seeking an energetic, self-motivated individual for a full-time Code Enforcement Officer.

Job responsibilities:

General Help

Submit resume or application no later than March 22, 2021, to Peru Utilities, PO Box 67, Peru, IN 46970, Attn: Brenda Tillett, Exec.

General Help

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WABASH COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION WABASH COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
Notice is hereby given of a public hearing before the Wabash County Board of Zoning Appeals on the 23rd day of MARCH, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the office of the Wabash County Plan Commission, top floor the Wabash County Court House, Wabash, Indiana.
The purpose of the hearing is to consider the application of DANIEL & BRENDA EADS for SPECIAL EXCEPTION # 3: TO CONSTRUCT A POND, LAKE, OR EARTHEN STRUCTURE GREATER THAN 100 SQ FT IN AN AG ZONED DISTRICT. WITH VARIANCE FROM: THE SET-BACK DISTANCE FOR A POND FROM AN ADJOINING PROPERTY LINE
The geographical area affected by the changes requested is generally described as: PART OF THE SOUTHEAST 1/4 OF SECTION 13, TOWNSHIP 28N, RANGE 7E, LAGRO TOWNSHIP, WABASH COUNTY, 15.78 ACRES
A copy of the proposal is now on file in the office of the Wabash County Plan Commission and is available for public examination. Any written objections that are filed with the secretary of the Wabash County Plan Commission prior to the hearing will be considered and, at the hearing, the Wabash County Plan Commission will consider any additional comments concerning the application. The hearing may be continued from time to time as may be found necessary.
NOTICE: Indiana Code 36-7-4-920 forbids any person from communicating with a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals before the hearing with the intent to influence a member's action on a matter pending before the Board.
LARRY C. THRUSH
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HCAC Tournament heartbreak for Spartans

Franklin edges MU in hard-fought HCAC semifinal

By DILLON BENDER

In a tremendously hard-fought Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference (HCAC) Tournament Semifinal game, the No. 5 seed Franklin Grizzlies advanced past the No. 1 seed Manchester University Spartans by a final score of 78-73.

Manchester opened the game with great energy on both ends of the floor. A 10-2 run from the 17:55 mark to the 14:25 mark of the opening half saw the Spar-

tans grab a 13-6 lead. Manchester continued to hold a narrow lead over the Grizzlies for much of the 1st half.

Following a score by Mitch Mendenhall, from New Haven and Woodlan High School, that put the Spartans ahead 30-24 at the 4:03 mark, the Black and Gold were limited to just one more point in the opening period of play.

Franklin's 12-1 run to conclude the half saw the Grizzlies snag a five-point lead at the intermission 36-31.

Both teams battled in the second half as the game's physicality intensified. Neither side led by more than two possessions in the 2nd half.

A layup by Jackson Jannsen, from Carmel, put the Black and

Gold ahead by a point, 71-70, at the 1:48 mark of the second half. That lead was short-lived as Franklin's Payton Mills hit a tough layup in the paint to give the lead back to the Grizzlies.

After a missed three-pointer and turnover by the Spartans on its two final possessions, Franklin's Danny Goggins' four straight points lifted the Grizzlies to a 78-73 victory.

Manchester certainly saved its best performance of the season for its final contest. The trio of senior Spartans Matt Westman, from Michigan City, Cortiz Buckner, from Lafayette and Lafayette Jefferson High School, and CJ Hampton, from Hammond and Griffith High School, played their final contest in a Black and Gold uniform on Sunday after-

noon.

Hampton lined the stat sheet with 14 points, six rebounds, four assists, and two steals. Westman added 13 points, three rebounds, and two steals. Buckner added 12 points and four rebounds.

Forward Brandon Christlieb, from Ashley and Prairie Heights High School, led MU with 18 points and six boards on Sunday. Mitch Mendenhall added 10 points off the bench.

Franklin's Payton Mills poured in a double-double of 20 points and 11 rebounds. 8 of his 11 boards came on the offensive end of the floor.

Danny Goggins added 15 points off the bench, while Nathan Webb contributed 14 points and five rebounds in 27 minutes off the bench.

Franklin shot 29-of-61 from the field, good for 47.5 percent. The Spartans shot 41.5 percent (22-53) from the field on Sunday.

The Black and Gold made 22-of-26 (84.6 percent) free throw attempts. Franklin also had a strong day at the charity stripe, finishing 14-of-18 (77.8 percent).

Franklin held a 44-26 rebounding advantage in Sunday's HCAC Tournament Semifinal. The Spartans did manage to convert 13 Franklin turnovers into 23 points.

The Grizzlies (8-6) will advance to Wednesday's HCAC Tournament Championship at Transylvania.

Manchester (4-10) concludes its 2020-21 season.

Dillon Bender is the sports information director for Manchester University.

Williams earns Big Ten season honors

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

Iowa's Luka Garza is The Associated Press player of the year in the Big Ten Conference for the second year in a row and Michigan's Juwan Howard is coach of the year.

Garza won a split vote with Illinois' Ayo Dosunmu after being a unanimous pick in 2020. Garza and Dosunmu were unanimous choices for spots on the AP's All-Big Ten team, also announced Tuesday, in voting by 15 journalists who cover the conference.

Michigan's Hunter Dickinson was named newcomer of the year in a split vote with teammate Mike Smith.

Joining Garza and Dosunmu on the all-conference first team are Minnesota's Marcus Carr, Indiana's Trayce Jackson-Davis and Ohio State's E.J. Liddell.

The second team is made up of Michigan's Franz Wagner and Isaiah Livers, Illinois' Kofi Cockburn, Iowa's Joe Wieskamp and Purdue's Trevion Williams.

Garza, a 6-foot-11, 265-pound center from Washington, D.C., is the only men's basketball player in Big Ten history with 2,000 points, 850 rebounds, 125 blocked shots and 100 3-pointers.

Garza averages a conference-best 23.8 points per game and has 12 double-doubles in 27 games. He broke Roy Marble's



Michigan State Spartans forwards Malik Hall (25) and Aaron Henry defend Purdue Boilermakers forward Trevion Williams during the second half of a Jan. 8 game.

32-year-old career scoring record last month, and Iowa retired his No. 55 after its win over Wisconsin on Sunday.

Garza received 11 votes for player of the year while Dosunmu got four.

Dickinson, who entered the Big Ten when the league is loaded with post players, made his mark with 14.3 points and 7.7 rebounds per game. His 60 percent shooting ranks second in the conference behind Cockburn's 66 percent. He received 13 votes for newcomer of the year, and Smith received two.

Howard coached Michigan to the Big Ten title in a season when the Wolverines were forced to go on a COVID-19 pause for three weeks. Michigan finished ninth last year, Howard's first at his alma mater after six seasons as an NBA assistant. Howard got 14 votes for coach of the year; Illinois' Brad Underwood received the other one.

2021 AP All-Big Ten

players listed with school, class, height, weight and hometown ("u" denotes unanimous selection):

FIRST TEAM

Guard — Marcus Carr, Minnesota, Jr.,

6-2, 195, Pittsburgh.
u-Guard — Ayo Dosunmu, Illinois, Jr., 6-5, 200, Chicago.
u-Center — Luka Garza, Iowa, Sr., 6-11, 265, Washington, D.C.
Forward — Trayce Jackson-Davis, Indiana, So., 6-9, 245, Greenwood, Indiana.
Forward — E.J. Liddell, Ohio State, So., 6-7, 240, Belleville, Illinois.

SECOND TEAM

Guard — Joe Wieskamp, Iowa, Jr., 6-6, 212, Muscatine, Iowa.
Guard — Franz Wagner, Michigan, So., 6-9, 220, Berlin, Germany.
Center — Kofi Cockburn, Illinois, So., 7-0, 285, Kingston, Jamaica.
Forward — Isaiah Livers, Michigan, Sr., 6-7, 230, Kalamazoo, Michigan.
Forward — Trevion Williams, Purdue, Jr., 6-10, 265, Chicago.

Coach of the year — Juwan Howard, Michigan.
Player of the year — Luka Garza, Iowa, Sr., 6-11, 265, Washington, D.C.
Newcomer of the year — Hunter Dickinson, Michigan, Fr., 7-1, 255, Alexandria, Virginia.

Big Ten eager to end NCAA title drought

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

The coach of the Big Ten's last national championship team believes the conference's 20-year title drought could end this season.

"We've got four or five teams that are on top that could do it," Michigan State's Tom Izzo said. "There's enough good teams that we could get a couple teams in the (Final Four)."

The Big Ten hasn't won a title since Izzo coached Michigan State to the 2000 crown, unless you count Maryland's 2002 championship when it was still an Atlantic Coast Conference member. But the league rarely has boasted as much strength as it does now.

Big Ten schools make up three of the top five teams in the latest AP Top 25: No. 3 Illinois (20-6), No. 4 Michigan (19-3) and No. 5 Iowa (20-7). Ohio State (18-8) is ranked ninth.

That gives the league plenty of confidence in its post-season hopes heading into the Big Ten Tournament beginning Wednesday at Indianapolis.

"I think you've seen the bottom and the middle get stronger," Wisconsin coach Greg Gard said. "And I think this year specifically

you have the top that's elite. I think we've had one or two teams at times be elite (in the past). By elite, I mean Final Four-worthy. I think there's four teams right now that are probably in that category. I don't think in my time here we've ever had that."

The Big Ten benefited this year by having draft-worthy prospects such as Iowa's Luka Garza and Illinois' Ayo Dosunmu return to school. Michigan's Hunter Dickinson headlined the crop of impact newcomers.

That formula added up to a banner season.

"No other conference comes close when you look at the quality of teams top to bottom," Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said.

Former UCLA coach Steve Lavin discussed the depth of the Big Ten by making references to the 2011 season, when the Big East earned 11 NCAA Tournament bids — including the St. John's team he was coaching. That season ended with UConn winning the national title despite finishing ninth in the Big East standings.

The Big Ten's lack of recent titles has harmed the league's reputation, deserved or not.

"To me, conferences that are consistently represented in the Final Four is an

indication of a strong and healthy conference," said Lavin, an analyst for Fox Sports.

Since Michigan State's 2000 title, a Big Ten team has lost in the championship game seven times: Indiana in 2002, Illinois in 2005, Ohio State in 2007, Michigan State in 2009, Michigan in 2013 and 2018, and Wisconsin in 2015.

"Personally, I'd love to see a couple teams get there again," Izzo said. "I'd like to see a Big Ten (team) win it. It's a shame, but that's how you're judged."

Michigan-Illinois rivalry

Illinois is the highest-ranked team in the Big Ten and won its lone regular-season matchup with Michigan, which earned the conference's regular-season title and the top seed in the Big Ten Tournament by virtue of its higher league winning percentage.

That hasn't stopped Illinois from pointing out that it played a full 20-game conference schedule. Michigan shut down its program for three weeks due to the pandemic and played only 17 conference games.

Masked man

Illinois figures to have Dosunmu for the Big Ten Tournament after he missed

three games with a concussion and a broken nose. Dosunmu returned in a mask to score 19 points as Illinois beat Ohio State in its regular-season finale.

"I feel like a superhero with the black mask on," Dosunmu said.

Aching ankles

Iowa's Joe Wieskamp and Michigan's Eli Brooks both hurt their ankles in their teams' respective regular-season finales, leaving their status uncertain for this week. Iowa already lost forward Jack Nunge to a season-ending knee injury in late February.

Surging Spartans

Michigan State (15-11) seemed all but out of NCAA Tournament at-large consideration until it collected late-season victories over Illinois, Ohio State and Michigan. The Spartans now are likely to get an NCAA bid no matter how they fare this week.

Tipoff

The Big Ten tournament opens today with two games: Minnesota-Northwestern and Nebraska-Penn State. There are four games Thursday, with the winners advancing to face the top four seeds: Michigan, Illinois, Iowa and Purdue.

Turnovers prove too costly in Manchester spring football opener

The Black and Gold will host the Franklin Grizzlies on Saturday, March 13

By DILLON BENDER

The Bluffton University Beavers defeated the Manchester University Spartans 49-14 on the gridiron on Saturday, March 6.

The Beavers forced a young Manchester offense into committing eight turnovers on the day while also compiling 424 yards of offense.

The Black and Gold lost a pair of fumbles and had six passes intercepted.

Darian Greeley opened the scoring for Bluffton, rushing for a 2-yard score at the 4:30 mark of the first quarter. Greeley struck again early in the second quarter, scoring from three yards out to put the Beavers ahead 14-0.

Latsen Stoudymire, from Jacksonville, Florida, and Center Academy High School, got the Spartans on

the scoreboard with a 92-yard kickoff return.

Rookie quarterback Eric James, from Indianapolis and Decatur Central High School, connected with junior wide receiver Harrington Greer, from South Bend and Riley High School, on a 24-yard strike midway through the third quarter to round out the scoring for Manchester.

The Spartans were limited to 253 yards of total offense.

Bluffton improved to 2-0, 1-0 HCAC on the season. BU will take on Anderson on Saturday, March 13

The Black and Gold (0-3, 0-1 HCAC) will host the Franklin Grizzlies on Saturday, March 13 at Spartan Stadium. Kickoff is slated for 1:30 p.m.

Dillon Bender is the sports information director for Manchester University.

Transylvania upends Spartan women's soccer

MU's match today has been postponed

By DILLON BENDER

The Manchester University women's soccer team fell to the Transylvania Pioneers on Saturday, March 6, by a final score of 2-0.

Both teams were playing their second matches of the spring season. Transy scored once per half, netting goals in the 33rd and 51st minutes.

Sophomore Alex Parr, from Russiaville and West-

ern High School, placed a shot on goal for the Spartans in the 15th minute. Junior Becca Colbert, from Porter and Chesterton High School, made her first start of the season in goal and tallied 16 saves for the Spartans.

The Spartans' match at Defiance College on Wednesday, March 10, has been postponed. The Black and Gold (0-2, 0-2 HCAC) will take on Earlham College (0-2, 0-2 HCAC) on Saturday, March 13.

Dillon Bender is the sports information director for Manchester University.

Manchester men's soccer falls at Transylvania

Spartans host Defiance College today

By DILLON BENDER

The Manchester Spartans were defeated in men's soccer action by the Transylvania Pioneers on Saturday, March 6.

The host Pioneers scored two goals in just under a minute to sink the Black and Gold.

After an even fought first half, the Pioneers scored back-to-back goals in the 55th and 56th minute. Transy's Zach Hill hit the

back of the net first, with Jak Birdsong finishing a penalty kick just moments late to give the Pioneers a 2-0 lead.

The Manchester attack tallied seven shots on the afternoon. Adrian De Leon, from Corte Madera, California, and Redwood High School, totaled four saves in the goal for the Spartans.

Manchester (1-1, 1-1 HCAC) will host Defiance College (2-0, 2-0 HCAC) on Wednesday, March 10, as HCAC play continues.

Dillon Bender is sports information director at Manchester University.